

# EXPAND THE NETWORK OF GREEN STREETS IN SOUTH DOWNTOWN

*Throughout the South Downtown planning process, community members expressed a desire for a higher-quality natural environment, parks and park-like open spaces in South Downtown. These amenities are especially important as the area transitions into a higher-density community over time.*



The South Downtown Planning Study draft recommendations identified the designation of additional green streets in South Downtown as one way to accomplish Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plan goals with regard to open space.

Comprehensive Plan Policy UV 50 specifically calls upon the City to “Establish, through the combined systems of urban trails, green streets and designated boulevards, a network among the city’s varied open space features and urban villages and urban centers as well as connections with recreational and natural areas within the Puget Sound region.” Policy UV 40 prioritizes such amenities within “urban centers and villages targeted for the largest share of residential growth.”

The Pioneer Square and Chinatown/ International District Neighborhood Plans also advocate for an expanded network of open spaces and green streets. In the Pioneer Square Plan (1998), Occidental Avenue is identified as “critical area #1” in the plan, describing the existing green street as “one of the most beloved places in Seattle.” The neighborhood plan advocates weaving

*“the stadium/exhibition hall and Pioneer Square together by unifying this corridor across property boundaries. Extend the corridor south of Jackson St. by improving*



*the streetscape between Jackson and King and creating a public plaza along the western edge of the Kingdome property, terminating at the new ballpark.”*

The Chinatown/ International District Neighborhood Plan (1998) identified the need for “safe and dynamic public spaces” on major traffic corridors and pedestrian-oriented streets. In 2003, Inter\*Im Community Development Association created the *Chinatown, Japantown, Little Saigon Streetscape and Open Space Concept plan*. The plan included significant public involvement, and recommended pedestrian connections and green street-related improvements in Chinatown/International District and Little Saigon.

## WHAT IS A GREEN STREET?

As defined in the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element,

*“...Landscaping, historic character elements, traffic calming, and other unique features distinguish Green Streets from other Street Types. Green Streets are designed to emphasize pedestrian amenities and landscaping in areas that have dense, residential land uses. Each Green Street has its own unique character and design. The street right-of-way dimensions can vary significantly from street to street and from segment to segment.”*

Green Streets are defined in Seattle’s Land Use Code as follows: “Green street” means a street right-of-way which is part of the street circulation pattern, that through a variety of treatments, such as sidewalk widening, landscaping, traffic calming, and pedestrian-oriented features, is enhanced for pedestrian circulation and open space use.” A joint Director’s Rule for Seattle Department of Transportation

and Seattle Department of Planning and Development describes the following purposes of downtown green streets:

- Enhance pedestrian circulation and create open space opportunities in medium to high density residential areas lacking adequate public open space.
- Create a vibrant pedestrian environment in the street right-of-way that attracts pedestrians.
- Strengthen connections between residential enclaves and other Downtown amenities by improving the streetscape for pedestrians, bicycles and transit patrons.
- Support economic activity in Downtown neighborhoods by creating an attractive and welcoming “front door” for pedestrians.
- Maximize opportunities for trees and other landscaping to create a high quality open space.

Generally green streets complement local neighborhood traffic circulation patterns and pedestrian amenities. While providing an inviting environment for pedestrians, green streets must also be coordinated with the wider network of traffic patterns and street use. Green streets may slow traffic, redirect traffic, or close off a street to traffic altogether.

The design and construction of Green Street improvements may be funded by the City through capital improvements to a street, by adjacent property owners, or incrementally by developers in exchange for increased density or for departures from or flexibility in the application of Land Use Code requirements. Improvements—or construction of—Green Streets must meet Code-referenced public amenity standards and any street concept plan that may apply.



## Green Street Improvements for Common Recreation Area Requirement

Section 23.49.010 of the Land Use Code allows residential projects to meet up to 50% of the project's common recreation area requirement through improvements to green streets abutting or "in the general vicinity" of the project "if such an improvement is determined to be beneficial to the residents of the project."

## Green Street Improvements as Bonus Floor Area Amenity

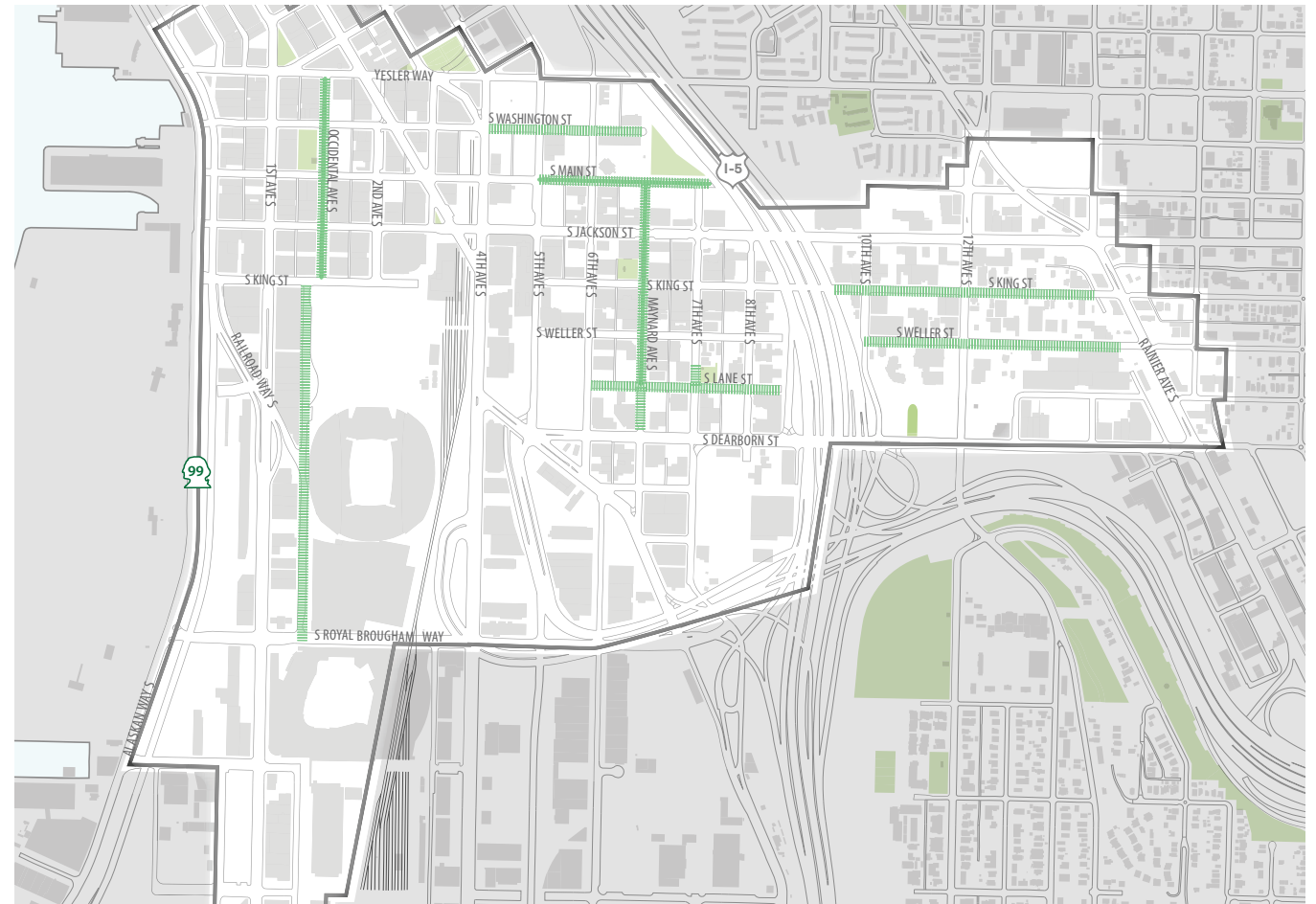
Section 23.49.013 of the Land Use Code allows green street improvements on abutting rights-of-way to be used to gain bonus floor area in residential, commercial or mixed use projects.

## Green Street as Required Open Space

Section 23.49.016 of the Land Use Code allows commercial development projects to use green street setbacks and green street improvements to count toward on-site public open space requirements on abutting streets or within ¼ mile of the project site, per approval by the Director of the Department of Planning and Development.

## Green Street setback required in the International District Residential (IDR) Zone

Section 23.49.248 of the Land Use Code currently requires a ten foot setback above 40' in structure height for buildings abutting a designated green street in order to allow access to light, to encourage the development of a full tree canopy, and to create a pedestrian-oriented scale of development. Further setbacks are required above 85 feet. A street-level setback for projects within the IDR zones in South Downtown is also proposed as identified on page 43 of this report.



### Green Streets Proposed and Existing for South Downtown



## GREEN STREETS PROPOSED FOR SOUTH DOWNTOWN

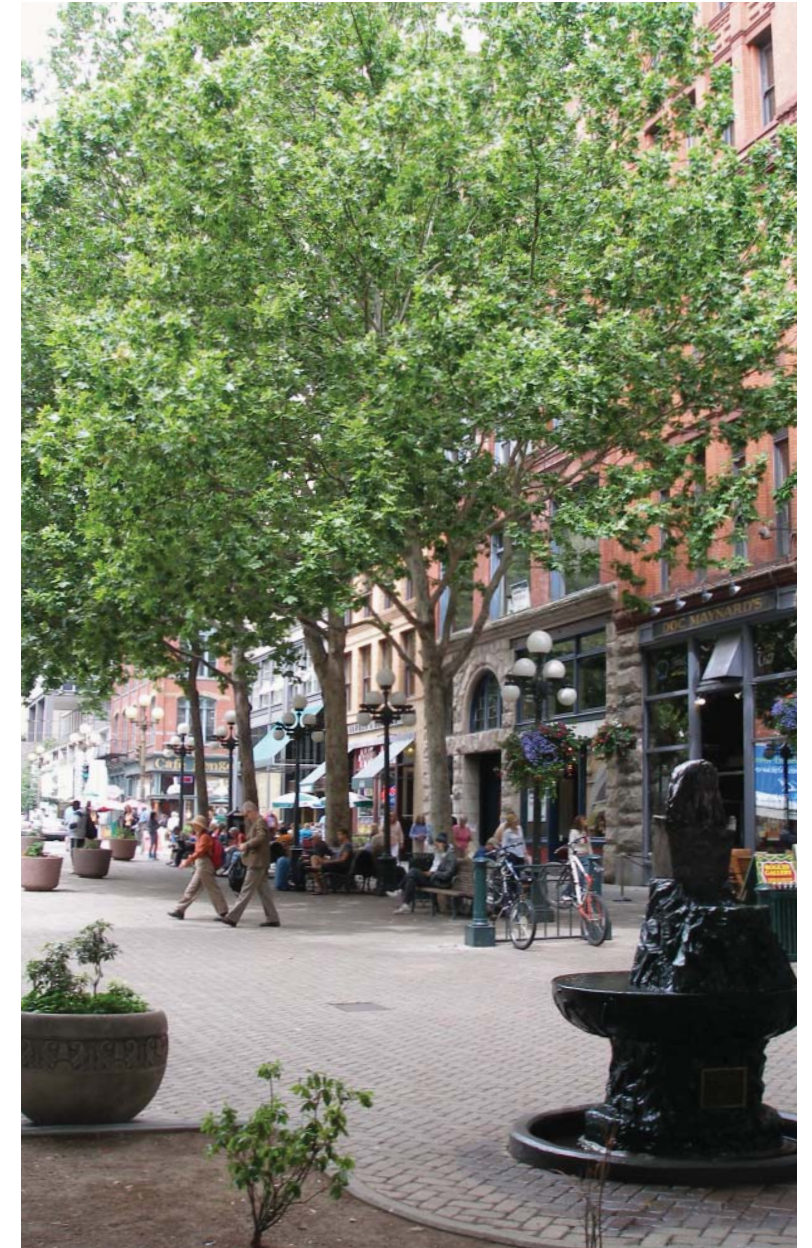
Green streets are typically located adjacent to higher-density residential or mixed use buildings on non-arterial streets. This is consistent with the location of green streets within South Downtown identified on the map on the previous page.

While no specific locational criteria exist for designating green streets, the City's Right-of-Way Improvements Manual identifies siting criteria for green streets as follows:

### RIGHT OF WAY IMPROVEMENTS MANUAL

#### Criteria for Designating New Green Streets

1. Streets in medium and high-density areas where residents generally do not have access to private yards, existing open space is very limited, and land is not available for future open space development.
2. Streets within or providing connections to pedestrian-oriented neighborhood commercial areas where Green Street improvements could reinforce commercial and mixed use activity, and enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment without conflicting with the desired traffic circulation.
3. Streets at critical locations in redeveloping areas that could serve as a focus for new development and provide direction for desirable changes in land use patterns. Examples might include streets that, as Green Streets, could strengthen the residential character of areas where efforts are being made to promote residential development or stabilize an existing neighborhood.
4. Streets and street ends that provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections with neighborhood attractions, such as schools, shopping areas, public facilities, institutions and public open spaces, or streets integrated with the City's urban trail network.
5. Streets that have a special character that is of interest to pedestrians, including streets providing shoreline access, streets with special views, and streets located in areas of unique historic or architectural interest.
6. Undeveloped streets within designated open spaces where it is desirable to retain the undeveloped conditions of the surroundings.





In general, each of the proposed green streets is located adjacent to residential and mixed-use zoning on non-arterial streets in areas that are identified as locations for future residential density in South Downtown:

Description of Proposed Green Streets in South Downtown

Proposed Green Street Designation	Adjacent Zoning, Land Use, and Street Classification
Pioneer Square	
Occidental Avenue south of S. Jackson Street, north of S. Royal Brougham Way	Adjacent zoning: PSM zoning on the western side of the street establishes a preference for residential mixed use development. To the east is the IC zoned Qwest Field and Exhibition Center, within the Stadium Transition Overlay District. This portion of Occidental Ave. S. serves as an intense pedestrian activity corridor during event days, access to residents to the west (and, in the future, on the site of the North Lot), retail and industrial delivery access and for semi truck trailers during staging for events. SDOT Street Classification: non-arterial
Chinatown/ International District	
S. Washington Street between Maynard Avenue South and 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South	IDR zoning provides an incentive for high-density residential development. The IDR 150 zone requires upper level setbacks, and the recommended IDR and IDR/C zoning will require a six foot setback at street level. The street abuts Kobe Terrace Park and abuts numerous vacant, developable lots. SDOT Street Classification: non-arterial
S. Lane Street between Interstate 5 and 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South	The IDM zone in this area provides an incentive for residential development with ground-floor retail and residential entrances. Numerous vacant and lightly-developed parcels present opportunities for future residential density in this area. The Chinatown/International District Community Center is located on the eastern terminus of the proposed green street. SDOT Street Classification: non-arterial
Maynard Avenue South between S. Lane Street and S. Dearborn Street (recommended extension of existing green street)	Zoning in this area is IDM, with an incentive for residential development north of S. Dearborn Street. Numerous development sites exist in this area. SDOT Street Classification: non-arterial.
East of Interstate 5 and Little Saigon	
S. King Street between Rainier Avenue South and Interstate 5	This area is recommended to be zoned DMR/C which provides incentives for residential density in a mid-rise and high-rise developments. This area presents numerous opportunities for future development. In general the area was identified in the Livable South Downtown Planning Study Final EIS as deficient in both open space and pedestrian amenities. SDOT Street Classification: non-arterial.
S. Weller Street between Rainier Avenue South and Interstate 5	

